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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: OCTOBER 06, 2009

Summary: Reports and photographs of a suicide attack at the UN World Food Program office in Islamabad, killing five people including a diplomat and two female employees garnered headlines in all newspapers on Tuesday. The leading mass circulation Urdu daily "Jang," and its sister English language newspaper, "The News," ran Ambassador Patterson's statement on their front-pages condemning the incident. Interior Minister Malik's remarks warning that "more incidents of blasts might occur as the terrorists are on the run" were also highlighted. In its editorial on the subject, the daily, "Dawn," observed that the "Monday's attack is a grim reminder that the fight against militancy is far from over."

The Kerry-Lugar Bill continued to receive intense media attention ever since its approval by the U.S. Congress. Newspapers portrayed a mix of reaction from various segments of Pakistani society, with some praising while other criticizing it. The prestigious daily, "Dawn," reported that the "government put up a stout defense in the National Assembly of the U.S. aid bill." However, in a front-page report another English daily, "The News," highlighted that "Pakistan has a good mind to reject Kerry-Lugar Bill." The same paper in another report noted that "President Zardari rejected criticism on Kerry-Lugar Bill and termed it the best aid bill." Several major newspapers gave prominence to Punjab Governor Taseer's remarks that the "criticism on the Kerry-Lugar Bill has been merely for the sake of criticism." Along with the story, several newspapers ran an AP story that "billions in U.S. aid (were) funneled away from Pakistan military." Commenting on the Kerry-Lugar Bill, the second largest nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" noted in its editorial that "Punjab Chief Minister Sharif's statement of not accepting aid at the cost of national dignity should not remain mere political slogan. The PML-N should play an active role in strengthening public opinion against the conditions of the Kerry-Lugar bill."

In other news, almost all newspapers highlighted reports that the "Christians of Gojra recorded protest with the U.S. diplomat" at an event where USAID relief supplies were being distributed. The villagers were protesting the police failure to arrest people involved in the communal violence on July 31 and August 1 this year. Also front-paged were reports that the new TTP (Tehrik Taliban Pakistan) chief "Hakimullah Mehsud appeared in video clip broadcast on local television, dispelling rumors of his death and vowing 'severe' new attacks on U.S. and Pakistani forces." End Summary.

News Stories

"Suicide Bomber Kills Five UN Aid Personnel" "Dawn" (10/06)

"At least five UN officials, a foreigner and two women among them, were killed and eight others injured on Monday when a suicide bomber dressed as a paramilitary soldier blew himself up after slipping through high security checkpoints at the main office of the World Food Program in Islamabad."

"UN Chief, U.S. Condemn WFP Attack" "The News" (10/06)

"In the press briefing at the UN Headquarters, Michele Montas, a spokeswoman for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon read out a condemnation statement on issued by Ban Ki-moon against the attack. Condemning the attack, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W. Patterson said senseless acts of violence against people who helped feed the poor and hungry were an attack on Pakistani society."

"Malik Warns Of More Attacks" "Daily Times" (10/06)

"Interior Minister Rehman Malik on Monday warned of more terrorist attacks in the days to come, as the Taliban might resort to 'rapid attacks' as a last ditch effort to pressure the government."

"UN Offices In Pakistan Closed Temporarily" "The News" (10/06)

"United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Monday ordered closing all offices of the world body in Pakistan for the time being for security concerns."

"Humanitarian Work To Continue: UN" "Dawn" (10/06)

"Officials say UN aid work will continue in Pakistan even though staff in Islamabad has been sent home since the bomb attack. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says the UN will continue its humanitarian assistance to more than 2 million Pakistanis in need of help."

"Govt. Defends U.S. Aid Bill In NA" "Dawn" (10/06)

"The government put up a stout defence in the National Assembly on Monday of the so-called Kerry-Lugar bill seeking to triple non-military U.S. aid to Pakistan to \$7.5 billion over the next five years, rejecting opposition charges that attached conditions would hit the country's interests. Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira, responding to criticism by opposition leader Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan at the start of the lower house session, said the conditions in the bill did not conflict with Pakistan's policies and pointed out that they would apply only to a still undetermined security assistance and not to \$1.5 billion a year civilian aid."

"Pakistan Has A Good Mind to Reject Kerry-Lugar Bill" "The News" (10/06)

"The government is gently moving in a direction where it may reject the Kerry-Lugar Bill in its present shape. The rejection will be accompanied by a request to the U.S. Congress and the Obama administration for an understanding of Pakistan's sovereignty and its right to decide issues of national security and foreign policy, according to several senior Pakistani officials and an important Federal Cabinet Minister."

"Zardari Rejects Criticism Of Kerry-Lugar Bill" "The News" (10/06)

"Asif Zardari on Monday night asked party leaders and Ministers to vigorously respond to the criticism of the party and government policies by its political adversaries. Briefing the media about the meeting, presidential spokesperson Farhatullah Babar said the President and party co-chairman also explained the salient features of the Kerry-Lugar Bill and rejected all criticism that conditions ostensibly attached to it undermined the country's sovereignty in any way."

"Opponents Of Lugar Bill 'Armchair Critics'" "Dawn" (10/06)

"Governor Salmaan Taseer says criticism on the Kerry-Lugar Bill has been merely for the sake of criticism and all opposing it are 'armchair critics.' It is a grant-in-aid and not a loan, he said at a news conference at the Governor's House, Lahore on Monday."

"Billions In U.S. Aid Funneled Away From Pakistan Military" "Daily Times" (10/06)

"The US has long suspected that a majority of the billions of dollars it has sent to Pakistan to battle the Taliban has been diverted to the domestic economy and other causes, such as fighting India. However, the scope and longevity of the misuse has become clear after two army generals have claimed that between 2002 and 2008, while Al Qaeda regrouped, only \$500 million of the \$6.6 billion in American aid actually made it to the Pakistani military."

"Kerry-Lugar Bill Proves U.S. Is Eternal Friend: Haqqani" "Daily Times" (10/06)

"The Kerry-Lugar Bill has allayed Pakistan's fear that the U.S. would abandon Pakistan, envoy to the U.S. Hussain Haqqani said while talking to a private news channel on Monday."

"Corps Commanders To Discuss Aid Bill Tomorrow" "The News" (10/06)

"The corps commanders will discuss the Kerry-Lugar Bill in a meeting tomorrow (Wednesday), it is learned. A meeting of the top military commanders has been convened on Wednesday at the GHQ, which would be chaired by COAS General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani."

"Christians Record Protest With U.S. Diplomat" "Dawn" (10/06)

"The Christians of Gojra refused on Monday to accept relief goods from Lahore U.S. Consulate Principal Officer Carmella Conroy in protest against, what they say, police failure to arrest the people involved in the communal violence in Gojra on July 31 and August 01, 2009."

"Hakeemullah Alive, Vows To Expedite Attacks" "Dawn" (10/06)

"New leader of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan Hakeemullah Mehsud, thought by Pakistani and U.S. officials to have been killed in infighting, appeared before a small group of journalists at an unspecified place in South Waziristan on Monday, vowing to avenge the killing of his predecessor Baitullah Mehsud and expedite attacks on U.S. and Pakistani forces."

"Surrender Of Bajaur Militants Deadline Extended But Locals Continue To Flee" "Dawn" (10/06)

"The government extended on Monday the deadline, set for Mamond tribes of Bajaur tribal region to hand over militants in their respective areas, for three days but locals, fearing a military operation in near future, continued to shift to safer places."

"Security Forces Claim Killing 3 Militants In Bajaur" "The News" (10/06)

"The security forces claimed to have killed three militants and wounded as many while two others were arrested in injured condition during fierce clashes in Charmang area of Bajaur's Nawagai sub-division on Monday."

"Five Militants Killed" "Dawn" (10/06)

"Five militants were killed when helicopter gunships targeted their hideouts on the Gurguri hilltop in Bara tehsil of Khyber Agency on Monday."

"Sufi's Close Aide, Nine Others Surrender In Dir" "The News" (10/06)

"Ten suspected militants, including a close lieutenant of the outlawed Tanzim Nifaz Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) chief Maulana Sufi Muhammad, surrendered to the administration on Monday."

"Eight Taliban Killed In Malakand Agency" "Daily Times" (10/06)

"Security forces killed eight Taliban and arrested another 13 in Malakand, a security forces spokesman said on Monday."

"Pakistan Has Forces, Arms For Waziristan Action: U.S." "Dawn" (10/06)

"Pakistan has mobilized enough forces and equipment to launch a long awaited ground offensive against the Taliban in their South Waziristan stronghold near the Afghan border, US defence officials said on Sunday.... 'We would assess that they have plenty of force to do the job right now,' said one of the officials, who has been closely monitoring Pakistani preparations for the offensive."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Islamabad Attack," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (10/07)

"Terror struck in Islamabad once again on Monday: a suicide bomber killing several people in the UN World Food Program's offices.... Yet, Monday's attack is a grim reminder that the fight against militancy is far from over. The state may be growing in confidence and developing better means to thwart the militants, but the threat of violence is still very real. Indeed, the central question remains unanswered: is the present, sporadic violence a sign that the militancy phenomenon is in its last throes or does it represent a relative lull while the militants regroup?"

"Hitting The Innocents," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/06)

"Whoever bombed the World Food Program office in Islamabad F8/3 knew that this was an organisation that had done more to help the people of Pakistan than almost any other UN agency. The WFP feeds people, it has no aggressive or warlike face and you would need a very warped view of the world to consider it a threat - or a target.... Even without a claim of responsibility it is reasonable to assume that this was carried out by one of the several extremist groups currently laying siege to our society. They are a clever and sophisticated enemy who could possibly have sympathizers inside our defensive walls who will look the other way as the man with the bomb in the box saunters past. Ultimately, nothing and nowhere is 'safe' anymore."

"Blast At The UN Office: Are The Extremists Regrouping?," an editorial in the liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir.25,000) (10/06)

"Yesterday's attack should be thoroughly investigated so it can be determined as to what forces were behind such attacks. It would not be difficult to get the [terrorist] leadership once the perpetrators of this attack are apprehended. This would help uproot terrorism from this region and the world."

"U.S. Goes Too Far," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (10/06)

"As U.S. pressure becomes more overt, aggressive and intrusive, the reaction against it becomes more expressive and spreads across the board.... But the U.S. seems to be in no mood to adopt any rational mode of behavior. Now it has been reported that the Pakistani government has gone an accommodative step further - some would say too far - and declared that if the U.S. thinks there are remnants of the Taliban Shura present in Quetta, Pakistan would be prepared to take U.S. officials alongside and target these holdouts in their presence.... This is an untenable position and Pakistan needs to state unequivocally that 'enough is enough.' No monetary aid can make such submissions as we are seeing our leadership make acceptable.... The nation has realized the U.S. has gone too far. When will the leadership understand the same?"

"Government's Reconnaissance Offer To U.S. Army In Balochistan," an editorial note in the second largest nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (10/06)

"What is the need to offer reconnaissance to the U.S. when proof has already been provided to Admiral Mullen about the non-existence of Taliban Shura in Quetta.... Does the U.S. allow the rest of the world to tour specific [sensitive] areas? Not possible. In fact it [the U.S.] presents foreigners to the [sniffer] dogs before they enter the U.S; people are strip-searched.... The U.S. is now looking for excuses to launch drone strikes in Balochistan now."

General Kayani had responded by saying courageously that no one would be allowed to attack Balochistan. He should turn this statement into a policy and make it clear to the U.S. that drone strikes on Balochistan would not be tolerated."

"Dangerous Ambitions Of Enemies In Balochistan," an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (10/05)

"It seems that like Waziristan and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), the U.S. is fabricating new lies in order to play a similar game in Quetta. It has assigned a very important role to India against Pakistan and if we fail to take timely remedial measures, the situation can take a very dangerous turn. We hope that our government would take immediate steps to encounter all the machinations of the U.S., Israel and India against our country."

"Need For Restraint," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (10/06)

"The Obama administration increased pressure on Pakistan for dismantling what it calls Taliban's command structure in Quetta. As the U.S. has not ruled out carrying out drone attacks in parts of Balochistan.... Such strikes, since they act like a blunt instrument, often cause collateral damage killing civilians and, in the process, raising anti-U.S. sentiment. Terrorists take advantage of such a situation and succeed in taking more terrorists into their fold.... The U.S. administration should also take a lesson or two from its experiences in FATA where its drone attacks caused the terrorists to strike in cities."

"Don't Just Raise Slogans Of Rejecting U.S. Assistance," an editorial note in the second largest nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (10/06)

"Mian Shahbaz Sharif's statement of not accepting aid at the cost of national dignity should not remain mere political slogan. The PML-N should play an active role in strengthening public opinion against the conditions of the Kerry-Lugar bill. The party should inform the nation about the pros and cons of this assistance - this is a matter of safeguarding national dignity, not playing politics."

"Nation Cannot Accept Aid In Exchange Of Its Honor," an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (10/06)

"The U.S. is planning to target the Pakistani Army and the ISI. To attain this objective, Washington is using its financial assistance as a bait which would go to the pockets of the rich instead of its utilization to improve the lot of the poor Pakistani masses. This nation can live with poverty but cannot accept slavery in the form of such financial aid. All political parties, labor unions, media and the civil society should raise their voice against the Kerry-Lugar Bill."

"Analyzing Kerry-Lugar," an op-ed by Syed Mohammad Ali in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (10/06)

"Instead of being critical just for the sake of criticism, however, it would be better if the media and the opposition were to look more closely into the text of the revised version of the Kerry-Lugar bill, and to double check claims of U.S. and Pakistani officials concerning not only the sanction clauses, but also the administrative costs of incoming aid, and means to ensure involvement of local organizations in its disbursement. If most of their fears are alleviated, it would still be useful for the current opposition and the media to play a constructive role in maintaining vigilance during the process of aid disbursements over the next five years, so that there is eventually more progress to show on the ground, once the allocated funds have been spent."

"Kerry-Lugar," an op-ed by Mir Jamilur Rahman in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/06)

"A country which is submerged up to its neck in debt, which Pakistan is, cannot be 100 per cent sovereign. Nor can it dictate terms entirely to its own liking. President Zardari and his able team spent nearly a week in the U.S. lobbying for the passage of the

Kerry-Lugar Bill on the best possible terms. The outcome of its efforts is amazing: \$1.5b per year for the next five years, not as a loan but as an outright grant for the social uplift of the poor.... Pakistan has incurred heavy losses by supporting the American war on terror, which is our war also.... The Kerry-Lugar Bill is in fact a token of US appreciation for the fruitful efforts of Pakistan security forces against the Taliban. It is in the interest of Pakistan that NATO force remained in Afghanistan until full peace is secured."

"Pakistan And U.S. Aid," an op-ed by Shahid Javed Burki in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (10/06)

"Directly or indirectly the United States has been involved in helping Pakistan develop its economy.... This time around, the U.S. is committing itself to helping Pakistan to improve the lives of its citizens. This is being done as a part of the belief that unhappy people are potential insurgents and there are many of those in Pakistan.... However, bypassing the government and giving aid directly to non-government organizations may appear to be attractive over the short-term but would be very counterproductive over the long-term. What the United States should be turning its attention to right away is to build the institutions of government rather than ignore them."

"Afghanistan Issue: U.S. Consultation With Pakistan" an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (10/06)

"Coincidentally, the battle in Nuristan took place at a time when Afghan and Pakistan governments were in consultation in Washington about the future strategy.... Despite grave differences, the Afghan and Pakistan delegations agreed on one point: immediate U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan could lead to devastation in the region. This needs some clarification. Before finalizing such points, the government should discuss them with elected representatives. There is no alternative for collective wisdom."

"NWFP Takes The Brunt," an op-ed by Nasser Yousaf in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (10/06)

"The U.S. might be an ignoble villain responsible for all the world's woes but it is doing one thing right: keeping the Afghans from fleeing their country like they did during the Soviet occupation and subsequent Taliban rule.... Pulling out at this stage would amount to handing over Afghanistan to the Taliban, which would undoubtedly force another wave of migration of Afghans and their consequent settlement in the Frontier. This could be the worst imaginable nightmare for the Frontier as the province - teetering and crumbling - is seen grappling with the most decisive moments of its volatile history."

"The Afghan Fallout," an op-ed by Dr. Maleeha Lodhi in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/06)

"The U.S. and coalition forces will face greater difficulties against the insurgency especially if the present strategy remain unchanged and when a fraud-stricken Presidential election in Afghanistan has denuded the country of a legitimate government. One response being proposed in the U.S. to this dire situation is a substantial surge of military forces. But to what end, at what cost and with what chances of success?... If the central objective is to disrupt and defeat Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan's border region can this be achieved through a military escalation? Even if the stated aim is to protect the population, more troops will mean intensified fighting with the Taliban. But Al Qaeda can only be neutralized in Afghanistan and in the border region with Pakistan if it is rejected by and ejected from the Taliban 'sea' in which it survives. This urges a strategy to separate the two movements by military, political and other means."

"The Afghan Quagmire," an op-ed by Rahimullah Yusufzai in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/06)

"The current U.S. predicament reminds one of the Soviet dilemma in

the 80s when the Red Army occupation troops in Afghanistan were pulled out of far-away military outposts to avoid further harm. When this policy was implemented, the Afghan countryside gradually fell into Mujahideen hands, the highways and roads linking cities became unsafe and the communist government of President Babrak Karmal and his successor President Dr. Najibullah started weakening.

This scenario could be repeated if the NATO forces were to pull back to better defended urban centers, thereby leaving most of the rural areas in southern and eastern Afghanistan in Taliban hands. This would also put to rest any remaining western hopes of winning the hearts and minds by interacting with the Afghan people and solving their problems to make their lives better than under the Taliban.... This would mean more fighting, though it is doubtful if the military stalemate in Afghanistan could be broken. And then, after a few months the Obama administration could be carrying out another policy review and wondering what to do next to extricate itself from the Afghan quagmire."

"U.S. Must Withdraw From Afghanistan," an op-ed by Rizwan Asghar in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (10/06)

"No doubt, the Taliban have no popular support in Afghanistan but the presence of foreign troops there continues to provide them a best recruiting ground in their own country. The Taliban cannot be expected to surrender soon and their leadership remains out of the reach of NATO forces. The support of U.S. citizens for the Afghan war has already dropped to a record low. So now it is left with no other option but to withdraw its forces from the country.... The expansion of Afghan war theatre into Pakistan will compound U.S. difficulties. Therefore, the U.S. administration must let sanity prevail and accept its forces' inevitable defeat in Afghanistan."

"What Is The Justification For Indian Presence In Afghanistan?," an editorial in the Lahore-based Urdu daily "Waqt" (10/06)

"After all what is the justification for Indian presence in Afghanistan? Isn't it in Mike Mullen and Holbrooke's notice that whenever the Allied forces meet failure in Afghanistan, they raise a hue and cry about Mullah Umar and Usama bin Laden's presence in Pakistan?... The need is to take strong note of India's anti-Pakistan activities in Afghanistan. Pakistani leadership should also make it clear to the U.S. that peace in Afghanistan will remain elusive until the so-called Indian consulates in Afghanistan are closed down. In such a scenario, neither [Indo-Pak] talks can be held nor the gulf between the two countries be bridged."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson